



# The President's Daily Brief

*April 15, 1975*

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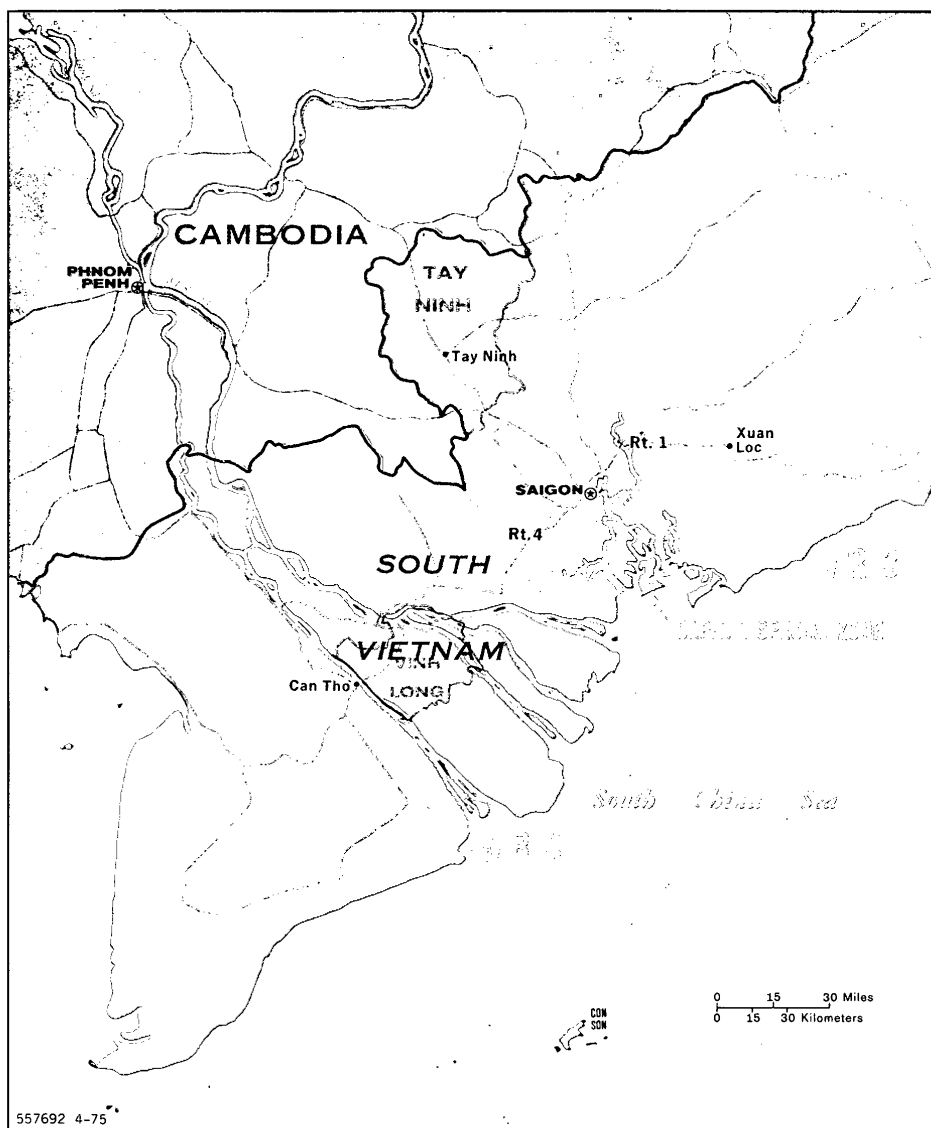
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SOUTH VIETNAM

*The South Vietnamese still hold Xuan Loc, and their strong defense around Can Tho appears to be forcing the North Vietnamese to pull back in some disorder.*

The communists continue to hit Xuan Loc with artillery fire, but they have been beaten back on the ground. The South Vietnamese 1st Airborne Brigade has been clearing the southern approaches to the city with the help of artillery, and a regiment from the 5th Division has joined forces clearing the roads west of the town. One government battalion has been cut off, however, and a government rescue force is attempting to reach the isolated unit.

Nearer Saigon, communist gunners last night and early this morning shelled Bien Hoa airbase. No casualties were reported, but two runways were damaged and closed temporarily. Communist sappers set off explosions in a bomb storage area, wounding 29 South Vietnamese personnel, according to preliminary casualty reports.

In the delta, government units in recent days have driven attacking communist forces back from positions threatening populated areas and major highways. Delta officials think that the North Vietnamese 4th Division threat to Can Tho City has been substantially reduced. Although orders from the 4th Division continue to refer to preparations for battle, most of the division is pulling back. In some cases, the withdrawing units have left behind much of their equipment, ammunition, and food; some units reportedly broke and ran.

In addition to reopening Route 4 just north of Can Tho, seven South Vietnamese infantry and armor battalions have moved into communist-held areas of Vinh Long Province, driving enemy forces away from some of the artillery positions used to shell Can Tho.

Strong communist artillery attacks and the appearance of tanks just north of Phan Rang suggest the communists are getting ready to launch a frontal attack there soon. Military Region 3 Commander

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General Toan, who is now also responsible for Phan Rang and Phan Thiet cities, is unhappy with Saigon's order to withdraw the 2nd Airborne Brigade from Phan Rang and replace it with a reorganized element of the 2nd Division. Toan would like to hold the airbase, from which air strikes are being launched, but concedes that without the airborne his troops are no match for the communists.

The communists fired some 50 rocket and artillery rounds into Tay Ninh City yesterday, damaging a hospital and destroying an ammunition dump. Only one regiment of the South Vietnamese 25th Division remains in the city--the remainder has been deployed south to protect the roads linking Tay Ninh with Saigon. The communists currently have enough manpower left in northern Tay Ninh Province to challenge the city's defenses, especially since Saigon has shifted its armored units to the Xuan Loc battlefield.

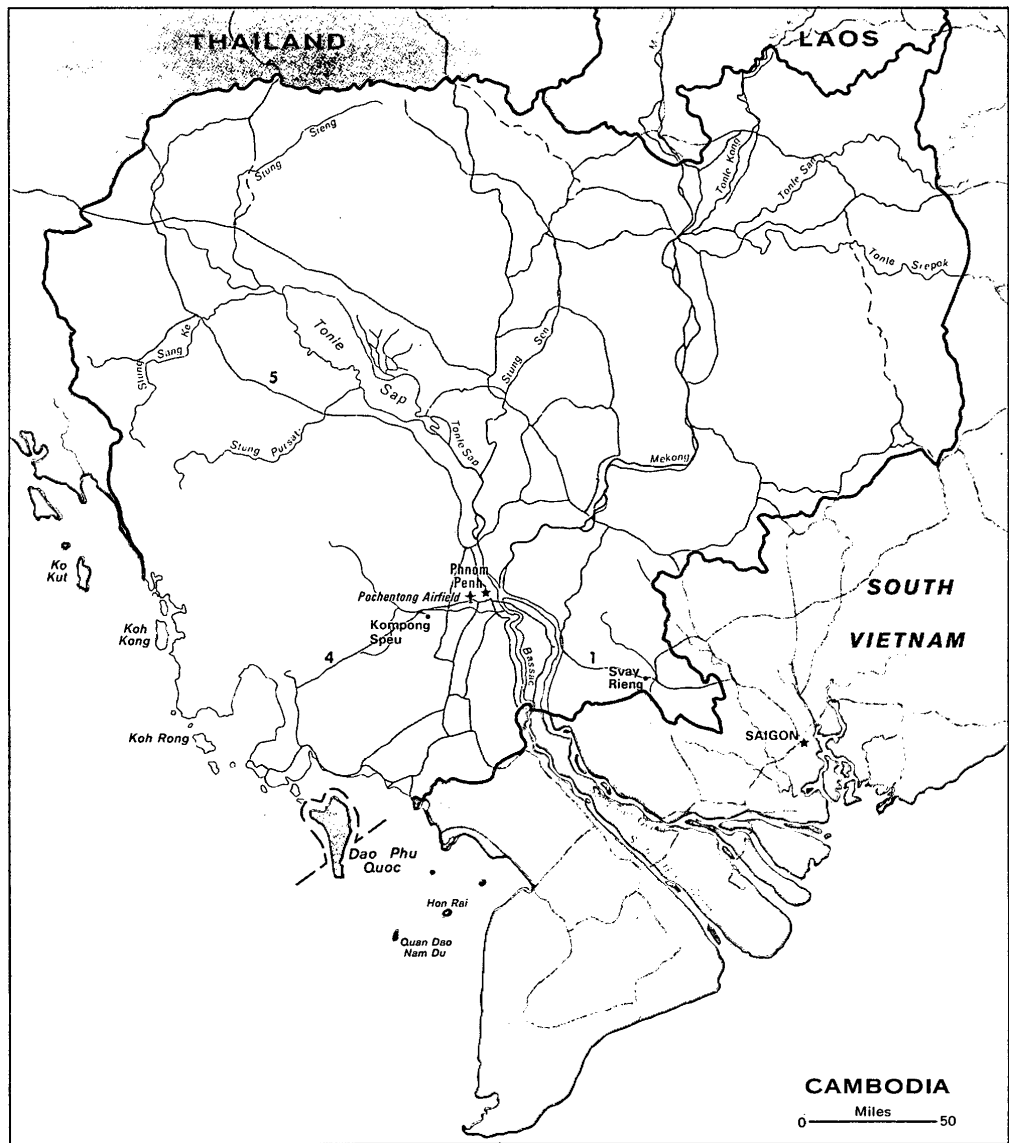
[redacted] communist plans to carry out attacks from inside Saigon in the near future. While the communists have the capability of infiltrating small units such as sappers into the capital area, there are no indications yet of communist main force units moving into position for direct attacks on Saigon itself.

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[redacted] "armed units" are now infiltrating Saigon, but that they will not begin their attacks until government units have been defeated in battles outside the city. According to the source, the communists hope to get the South Vietnamese to commit all of their reserves along major approaches to Saigon, leaving the city with few defensive forces.

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**CAMBODIA**

*The Khmer communists, pressing closer to Phnom Penh from the northwest, have launched major attacks southeast of the capital in an apparent final attempt to force the government's capitulation.*

Heavy fighting west and northwest of the capital is reportedly forcing large numbers of refugees and some government troops to flee into the city. Communist forces may be infiltrating into the capital under cover of the heavy flow of refugees.

Communications intercepted yesterday indicated that the insurgents had gained control of the market area at the northeast edge of Pochentong between the airfield and Phnom Penh. A civilian aircraft attempting to land at the airfield late yesterday reportedly found it and the control tower deserted. Unconfirmed reports state that government forces early today reopened the road between Phnom Penh and Pochentong and that the airfield remains operational. The communists, for their part, claimed in a radio broadcast today that they have captured the airfield.

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**EGYPT**

*In a move intended partly to divert popular attention from the suspension of peace negotiations, President Sadat last night appointed former interior minister Mamduh Salim as prime minister and said he would announce members of the new cabinet tomorrow.*

Salim replaces Abd al-Aziz Hijazi, who has been the chief target of public criticism over continuing economic ills. Hijazi is a competent economist, but has been overburdened with both responsibilities as prime minister and specific economic duties and has been unable to speed the process of economic revitalization.

Manifestations of economic discontent usually surface in Egypt during periods of diplomatic stagnation in Arab-Israeli affairs. Sadat appears intent on reassuring the Egyptian people that there will be no letup in the government's program of economic development. At the same time, the appointment of Salim, the former head of Egypt's security apparatus, will signal malcontents that public disturbances will not be tolerated.

Salim will be no better able than Hijazi to solve Egypt's basic economic problems. He and Sadat are expected to appoint a more efficient economic team, however, than the one in the outgoing cabinet. Such a group conceivably could overcome some of the bureaucratic ineptitude that has obstructed economic development.

President Sadat will continue to formulate and guide policy. Salim is a loyal Sadat partisan with apparently little personal political ambition.

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ISRAEL

*Foreign Minister Allon's two-week visit to the US, which began yesterday, is viewed with some misgivings in Israel.*

Conservatives, including several within the cabinet, apparently believe the trip, only three weeks after the suspension of indirect Egyptian-Israeli negotiations, suggests that Tel Aviv's resolve to stick to its negotiating demands may be weakening. [ ] the government is [ ] unnecessarily exposing itself to high-level US pressure for new Israeli proposals to revive the peace talks with Egypt. [ ]

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Tel Aviv has emphasized that the basic rationale for Allon's US trip--which includes several appearances at Jewish fund-raising rallies--is to explain and justify Israel's position on negotiations with the Arabs. A major Israeli information campaign in the US is already under way, and several prominent Israelis--including ex-foreign minister Eban and Prime Minister Rabin's wife--left for the US yesterday to participate. Others, such as former information minister Yariv and ex-defense minister Dayan, arrived earlier.

Allon, nevertheless, clearly will seek a reading from US officials in Washington on the possible implications for Israel of the current US policy reassessment. Tel Aviv, in fact, appears to be awaiting the outcome of Washington's policy reassessment before making any new moves of its own.



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## NOTES

*The chances of a serious incident in the Aegean has eased for the moment because Turkey has called off [ ] flights over three Greek islands in the eastern Aegean.*

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[ ] Ankara has stopped the flights because it now has sufficient information on Greek armaments, fortifications, and manpower on Lesbos, Samos, and Chios. Turkish military leaders have scheduled a two- or three-day planning session [ ] that will include the development of a strategy for invading the three islands should the Greeks take some aggressive action. [ ] Ankara will continue its public complaints about the Greek reinforcement of Rhodes and the other Dodecanese islands, but [ ] [ ] does not view the arming of these islands as a threat to Turkey.

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*Israel may have begun series production of its "super Mirage" fighter aircraft.*

[ ] last week that he believed about eight of the aircraft have already been built. He based his conclusion on sightings he made of new serial numbers of Mirage-type aircraft. Yesterday the aircraft was shown to the public for the first time.

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*Armed clashes in Lebanon between radical fedayeen elements and members of a conservative Lebanese political group--the Phalanges Party--come at a particularly bad time for the government of Prime Minister Sulh.*

Sulh, who has been in office for six months, had scheduled a parliamentary vote of confidence for today. The unrest will delay the vote and could prompt Sulh to resign. The Phalangists advocate strict Lebanese control of Palestinian refugee camps and have repeatedly clashed with the fedayeen. The leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, while publicly attacking the Phalangists, appears to be helping behind the scenes to contain the situation.

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